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SUMMER GROUP COUNSELING OF PHOENIX COLLEGE FRESHMEN.

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IN SUMMER 1965, PHOENIX COLLEGE OFFERED A PILOT PROGRAM OF GROUP COUNSELING FOR PROSPECTIVE FRESHMEN. STUDENT VOLUNTEERS WERE OBTAINED THROUGH NEWSPAPER PUBLICITY AND PROMOTIONAL EFFORTS OF HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS. OF 267 APPLICANTS, 45 WERE ASSIGNED TO A CONTROL GROUP. THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP WAS RANDOMLY DIVIDED INTO 23 SECTIONS, AVERAGING 12 STUDENTS EACH. THESE GROUPS MET IN 2-HOUR SESSIONS ON THREE DAYS WITHIN A 1-WEEK PERIOD OR TWICE WEEKLY OVER A 4-WEEK PERIOD. TESTING, VOCATIONAL INTERESTS, TEST INTERPRETATION, AND DISCUSSION OF COLLEGE POLICIES, CURRICULA, TERMINOLOGY, AND PROCEDURES CONSTITUTED THE CORE OF ACTIVITY AND DISCUSSION. IN AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM, GRADE POINT AVERAGES, SEMESTER HOURS EARNED, AND DROPOUT RATES FOR THE COUNSELED AND NON-COUNSELED GROUPS WERE COMPARED AT THE END OF ONE SEMESTER AND ONE YEAR. COUNSELED GROUPS ACHIEVED AT SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER LEVELS THAN THE CONTROL GROUP ON ALL MEASURES EXCEPT FOR THAT OF THE NUMBER OF SEMESTER HOURS EARNED. (AL)

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MARICOPA COUNTY
JUNIOR COLLEGE DISTRICT

SUMMER GROUP COUNSELING of PHOENIX COLLEGE FRESHMEN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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RESEARCH REPORT NUMBER 4

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

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CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
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INTRODUCTION

Public junior colleges are presently committed to providing opportunities for post high school education to all members of the community. The philosophy of maintaining an open-door admissions policy to all applicants and providing equality of educational opportunity commensurate with their interests and abilities is generally acknowledged. Junior colleges, because of their breadth of terminal and transfer curricula, are uniquely suited to providing educational services for students throughout the ability range. The crucial factor becomes one of providing the student with an awareness of his personal strengths, limitations if any, and identification of likely avenues of educational-vocational pursuit. The responsibility for appropriate guidance of the individual student primarily lies with the counseling staff.

In early 1965, the Phoenix College Administration and Counseling Staff decided to implement more aggressive action to plan, initiate and follow-up counseling programs. One project was to offer a pilot program of summer group counseling for prospective freshmen. Such a program it was felt, would provide several advantages. Foremost among these was that comprehensive counseling for students prior to matriculation would be accomplished. It is unrealistic to expect undecided or vaguely decided freshmen to select educational goals potentially suited to their interests and abilities during the brief period or registration and advisement. Because of the pressure of increasing enrollments upon a limited counseling staff, a secondary objective was to provide for increased effectiveness in counselor utilization through group methods. The need to evaluate the effects of such a pilot program was considered to be of singular importance. This report briefly outlines the general design, implementation, and follow-up results of the pilot group counseling program conducted at Phoenix College during July and August of 1965.

METHOD

A rather complex design was devised to test the effects of a variety of counseling methods and is reported elsewhere. Student volunteers were obtained through newspaper publicity and high school counselors who informed graduating seniors of the availability of the counseling program. It was decided that the pilot program should accommodate approximately two hundred fifty counselees.

Two hundred sixty-seven students were accepted into the program and 45 volunteers were deferred because of time, space, and staffing limitations. The deferred group was used as a similarly motivated control group to test the effects of group counseling. Students were randomly assigned to groups as their applications were received. A total of 23 groups were formed, averaging about 12 students per group. They were instructed to report on specific dates during June to take vocational interest tests and questionnaires. Three male counselors who were introduced to the purposes of the program and in its conduct were also randomly assigned to groups. Groups met for two hours daily for three days within a one-week period or twice weekly over a four-week period. The first meeting was devoted to interpretation of vocational interest tests, American College Test (ACT) scores, and the prediction of first semester grades from regression data. Vocational interests were related to both measured and professed aptitudes. Other meetings were education centered, i.e., school policies, curricula, terminology, and procedures were explained to the groups. Students were encouraged to identify and investigate curricula which were likely to be most compatible with their measured interests, aptitudes, and academic potential. Program planning for the first semester was initiated. Other meetings

meetings explored vocational and career information. Students were provided with career and occupational materials and encouraged to seek out highly detailed job information in their respective areas of interest. A summary of the meetings was presented. Students were invited to meet with members of the counseling staff upon an individual basis if they so wished.

To assess counseling effectiveness in this study, grade point average, semester hours earned, and drop-out rate were evaluated. Data were obtained from the counseled groups and non-counseled control group at the end of one semester and the end of the first academic year. The data were treated by appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics.

RESULTS

Attendance figures disclosed that of the 267 students accepted into the program approximately one-fourth failed to appear for counseling. Six percent of those who did participate failed to attend more than half the scheduled meetings, and were therefore deleted from the statistical analysis. Thus, 74 percent of the students who were accepted into the program did report, and of these, 96 percent were considered to have satisfactorily completed the counseling program. Thirty-three members of the volunteer control group actually enrolled and ten students did not register. Therefore, both counseled and control groups were approximately equivalent in terms of actual matriculation at Phoenix College.

A comparison of academic achievement between counseled students and the similarly motivated control group are presented in Illustration 1 and in Tables I and II. It will be noted that the counseled groups achieved at significantly higher levels than the control group upon all criteria except for semester hours earned.

At the end of one semester, the non-counseled group incurred a drop-out rate of about three times greater than the counseled group. Mean grade point averages of surviving students after one semester were also found to be significantly in favor of the counseled group.

Data collected in July, 1966, after two semesters of attendance essentially revealed the same findings as after one semester of college. For the non-counseled group, drop-out rate was about two times greater than for those who

received counseling (a decrease from that obtained during first semester). It was observed that the differences noted in first semester grade point average between the two groups widened, and that this was reflected in higher significance levels between the two groups. Total semester hours earned continued to favor the counseled group but was not significant.

TABLE I

FIRST SEMESTER DROP-OUT

	Number of Drop-Outs*	Percent Dropping Out
Counseled Students	6	3.3
Non-counseled Students	4	12.1

*Significant at .01 level of confidence
(Corrected by Yates[2] method for small cell frequency)

FIRST SEMESTER ACHIEVEMENT

	Mean Grade Point Average*	Mean Semester Hours Earned
Counseled Students	2.74	13.53
Non-counseled Students	2.96	13.17

*Significant at .05 level of confidence
Grading System: A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4

TABLE II

FIRST YEAR DROP-OUT

	Number of Drop-Outs*	Percent Dropping Out
Counseled Students	14	7.6
Non-Counseled Students	7	21.2

*Significant at .05 level of confidence

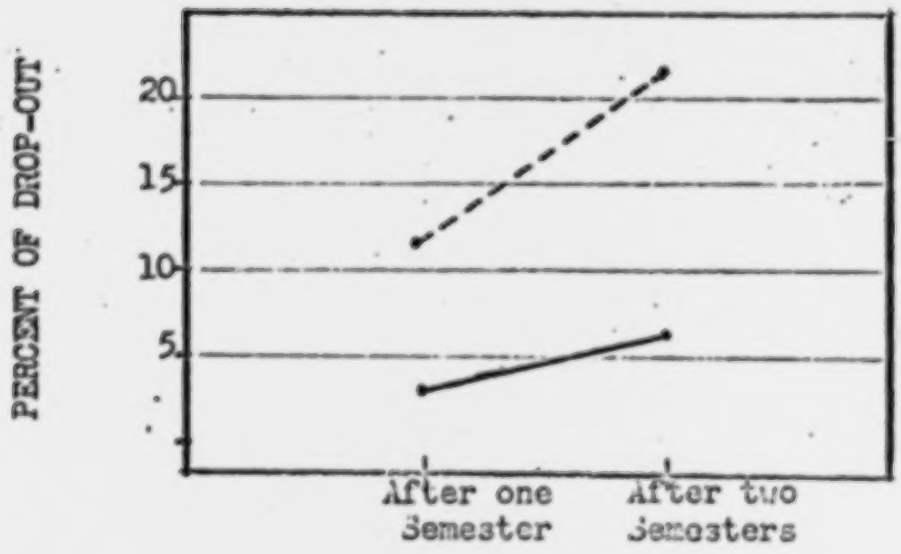
FIRST YEAR ACHIEVEMENT

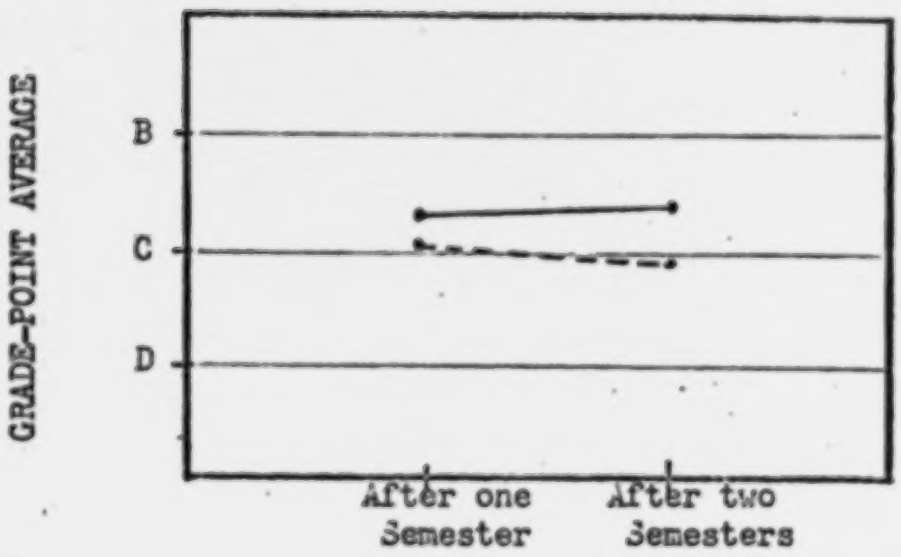
	Mean Grade Point Average*	Mean Semester Hours Earned
Counseled Students	2.71	27.84
Non-counseled Students	3.03	26.15

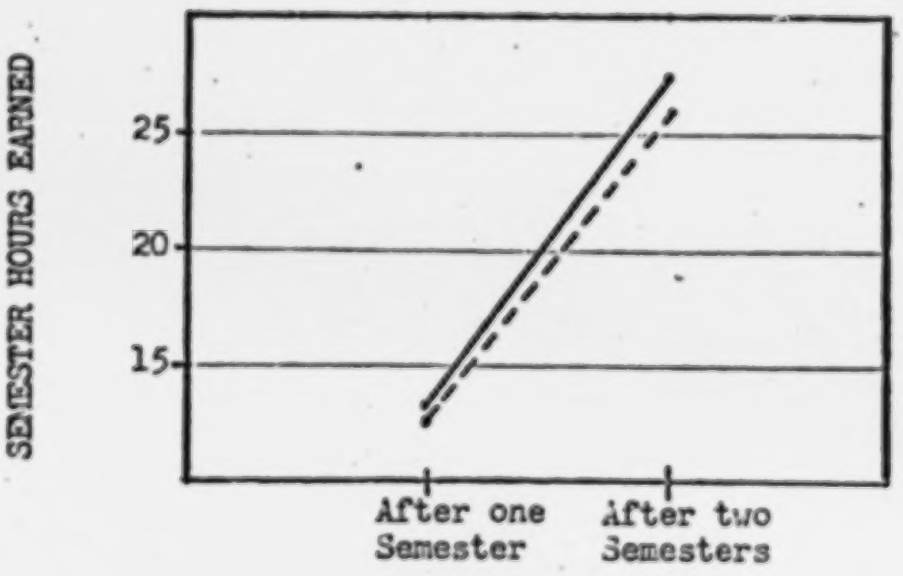
*Significant at .01 level of confidence
Grading System: A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4

ILLUSTRATION 1

Counseled Group ————
Non-Counseled Group - - - - - -







CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study indicate that group counseling of prospective freshmen was a worthwhile procedure. That students took advantage of counseling at a crucial point prior to entering college and possibly curtailed the number of crisis situations they would encounter, may in part possibly explain the favorable results. Group counseling of freshmen during the summer months was also found to be economical in terms of financial cost per student when compared to the one-to-one counseling situation. Increased staff and plant facility utilization during the normally slack summer period was another advantage. It should be stressed that the experimental and control groups in this study were equivalent in terms of motivation and if for no other reason, such a counseling program would be beneficial for students wishing to take advantage of this service. The problem of motivating more students to participate in such counseling programs remains. The net effect of increased academic achievement and decreased drop-out rate for counseled students argues for the implementation of such services wherever possible.

Because of its success, the Phoenix College counseling staff has now extended group counseling into the regular academic year. Students will be given the opportunity to register for group counseling which will be offered at various times and days of the week so as not to conflict with their regular course of studies. It is expected that these groups will terminate shortly before mid-term at which time new groups will be formed from under-achieving students. Under-achievers will be identified immediately following mid-term grades through the use of regression techniques and invited to participate in the newly formed groups.